

The embodiments of the invention in which an exclusive property or privilege is claimed are defined as follows:

1. A method for controlling the delivery of notifications comprising:
receiving a notification from a first notification sender; and
in response to receiving the notification, controlling the delivery of the notification in accordance with one or more user contexts that have been set by one or more context setters.
2. The method of Claim 1, wherein a user context comprises a condition that may be in first or second states, and an instruction that is to be followed if the condition is in the first state.
3. The method of Claim 2, wherein the condition of at least one of the user contexts relates to whether or not the user is at least partially visually occupied, and the associated instruction restricts the delivery of notifications in terms of their visual display.
4. The method of Claim 2, wherein the condition of at least one of the user contexts relates to whether or not the user is at least partially occupied by sound, and the associated instruction restricts the delivery of notifications in terms of their volume.
5. The method of Claim 1, wherein a plurality of user contexts that are associated with a specified user are set by a plurality of context setters.
6. A method for setting a user context comprising:
receiving at least one user context from at least one context setter;
in response to receiving the at least one user context, setting the user context such that the delivery of incoming notifications for the user from a plurality of sources will be controlled according to the user context.

7. The method of Claim 6, wherein a user context comprises a condition that may be in first or second states, and an instruction that is to be followed if the condition is in the first state.

8. The method of Claim 7, wherein the condition of at least one user context relates to whether or not the user is at least partially visually occupied, and the associated instruction restricts the delivery of notifications in terms of their visual display.

9. The method of Claim 7, wherein the condition of at least one user context relates to whether or not the user is at least partially occupied by sound, and the associated instruction restricts the delivery of notifications in terms of their volume.

10. The method of Claim 7, wherein the condition of at least one user context relates to whether or not the user is unavailable for receiving notifications of any kind, and the associated instruction restricts the delivery of notifications altogether.

11. The method of Claim 6, wherein at least one of the context setters is an operating system.

12. The method of Claim 6, wherein at least one of the context setters is a program other than an operating system.

13. The method of Claim 6, wherein a set of rules are defined by a user to dictate how notifications that contain at least a first specified element should be delivered.

14. One or more computer-readable media for enabling a notification sending computer-program segment to communicate with one or more other computer-program segments, said media comprising:

a set of computer-usable instructions that cause a request to deliver a notification for a user from a notification sending computer-program segment to be communicated to one or more other computer-program segments capable of executing said request, wherein the delivery of the notification is controlled in accordance with one or more user contexts.

15. The media of Claim 14, wherein a user context comprises a condition that may be in first or second states, and an instruction that is to be followed if the condition is in the first state.

16. The media of Claim 14, wherein the instruction of the user context may indicate that selected notifications should be at least one of routed, denied, deferred, or delivered.

17. The media of Claim 14, wherein the instruction of the user context may indicate that selected notifications should be restricted in terms of their visual display.

18. The media of Claim 14, wherein a plurality of user contexts that are associated with a specified user are set by a plurality of context setters.

19. The media of Claim 14, further comprising rules that dictate how notifications that contain at least a first specified element should be delivered, and which may provide exceptions to the instructions of the user contexts.

20. One or more computer-readable media for enabling a context setting computer-program segment to communicate with one or more other computer-program segments, said media comprising:

a set of computer-usable instructions that cause a request to set one or more user contexts from a context setting computer-program segment to be communicated to one or more other computer-program segments capable of executing said request.

21. The media of Claim 20, wherein a user context comprises a condition that may be in first or second states, and an instruction that is to be followed if the condition is in the first state.

22. The media of Claim 20, wherein when notifications that are related to a user context are received from a plurality of sources, the notifications are evaluated in accordance with the user context.

23. The media of Claim 20, wherein the context setting computer-program segment is part of an operating system.

24. The media of Claim 20, wherein the context setting computer-program segment is part of a program other than an operating system.

25. The media of Claim 20, further comprising a plurality of user rules that dictate how to control the delivery of notifications that contain specified elements that correspond to each rule.

26. The media of Claim 25, wherein the user contexts and user rules are made available to the user for modification in accordance with the user's preferences.

27. A method of communicating between a plurality of notification senders and a notification processing system comprising:

the plurality of notification senders issue calls for sending notifications to a user; and

the notification processing system receives the calls and processes the notifications in accordance with one or more user contexts.

28. The method of Claim 27, wherein a user context comprises a condition that may be in first or second states, and an instruction that is to be followed if the condition is in the first state.

29. The method of Claim 27, wherein the condition of at least one user context relates to whether or not the user is at least partially visually occupied, and the associated instruction restricts the delivery of notifications in terms of their visual display.

30. The method of Claim 27, wherein the condition of at least one user context relates to whether or not the user is at least partially occupied by sound, and the associated instruction restricts the delivery of notifications in terms of their volume.

31. The method of Claim 27, wherein the condition of at least one user context relates to whether or not the user is unavailable for receiving notifications of any kind, and the associated instruction restricts the delivery of notifications altogether.

32. The method of Claim 27, wherein a plurality of user contexts that are associated with a specified user are set by a plurality of different context setters.

33. A method of communicating between a context setter and a notification processing system comprising:

the context setter issues a call for setting a user context; and

the notification processing system receives the call and sets the user context.

34. The method of Claim 33, wherein a user context comprises a condition that may be in first or second states, and an instruction that is to be followed if the condition is in the first state.

35. The method of Claim 33, wherein the instruction of the user context may indicate that selected notifications should be at least one of routed, denied, deferred, or delivered.